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㉒ Method and apparatus for detecting bit sequences in data streams.

㉓ A method and apparatus are disclosed for accelerated detection of a data stream for embedded sequences of data bits referred to as "multi-byte sequences" in a data stream, used for high level interpretation or structuring of the data. The data stream is monitored continuously during normal data transfers between buffers along a data path for which several types of data may be transferred in interleaved fashion, without additional time used in the data transfer process. For data in which the special byte sequences are to be detected, if present, the existence of data bytes associated with the special byte sequences is flagged, enabling byte-by-byte scanning to be skipped for those transfers in which no sequence is flagged. Special character sequences which begin in one data transfer and are completed in the following one are also indicated.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

5 The general application of the invention is the processing of large data sets represented in a file or transfer medium made up of a sequence of data bytes conforming to a hierarchy of syntax rules. As used herein the term "byte" represents a quantum of binary digits ("bits") appropriate to the application. For example, an application processing standard ASCII text uses 7- or 8-bit data bytes conforming to the American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII).

10 The structure of such a data set (referred to herein for convenience as a "data stream") is made up of content data together with formatting information which control processing and presentation of the data. The 15 formatting information is identified within the data stream by sequences of one or more data bytes ("multi-byte sequences") which must be identified within the total sequence of bytes. When so identified, a special byte sequence must be analyzed in context to verify that it is indeed a formatting indicator, and that it conforms to the predefined syntax. For example, a data stream representing lines of ASCII text contains data bytes representing the text content of each line followed by a one or two- byte special byte sequence 20 indicating the end of the line and beginning of the next. In the text data stream, the data bytes coded according to the ASCII standard are referred to as "ASCII characters", or merely "characters". The two-byte sequence used traditionally for this low-level structural definition is the ASCII "return" character followed by the "newline" character, as a holdover from the mechanical typewriter / teletype era when a new line operation required a carriage return and line feed as successive mechanical control operations. Early text 25 processing equipment implementing this convention involved paper tape in which content characters punched were followed by the control characters which operated the carriage and platen controls at the end of each line. In punched paper tape technology, each byte in the total data stream was necessarily read sequentially and fully processed as read.

30 As digital data processing became available, parallel and / or asynchronous processing of data became possible through, for example, recirculating memories used for a Cathode Ray Tube (CRT) refresh buffer. Such a memory would contain a subset of data (a "buffer") in which all data bytes in the buffer were repeatedly scanned in sequence and individual special data bytes identified by data flags set at each time slice ("memory clock cycle"). For a CRT display of ASCII text, the buffer would be scanned continuously and processed by digital logic circuitry with every complete scan as required to update the transient CRT 35 image. In this example, the occurrence of an ASCII return character in one memory clock cycle followed by the occurrence of a newline character in the next would be used by a digital logic circuit to indicate a line ending, and appropriate signals would be sent to control the processing and display system.

40 With the advent of page description languages such as PostScript (a trademark of Adobe Systems, Inc.), very large data streams of structured data have become commonplace. This data is typically created by computer programs to represent output "documents", and is sent through a network or other transfer medium from the originating computer to a Raster Image Processor (RIP) for interpretation and production of the on-off sequence of control signals (the "raster") required by a marking device such as a laser printer or film recorder. As in the simpler examples described above, formatting and structural information must be 45 extracted by the processing system from the data stream using special character sequences which may in general occur at any point in the data stream. Moreover, abstraction of function in the processing environment, reflecting the hierarchical organization of the data, may require more than a single character-by-character scan from beginning to end through the data in order to carry out all processing. This is the case, for example, with the processing of a PostScript data stream by a RIP containing a spooler / printer preprocessor, which uses PostScript "comments" conforming to a high-level syntax and conventions to infer the structure of the document.

50 In the PostScript language, comments are introduced by the ASCII character "%", and consist of all characters between the "%" character and the end of the line (see "PostScript language Reference Manual", by Adobe Systems, Inc., published by Addison-Wesley, also known as the "Red Book"). Special comments are used to indicate document structure according to industry standard conventions. These are introduced by the two-character sequences "%%", "%!" and "%?". Since files of tens of megabytes can be required to represent the data, the time required to scan such data files to locate the two-character sequences can be substantial. Even though the document structuring conventions could require that the comments be located in a known place within the data stream (e.g., at the very beginning), the hierarchical organization of a PostScript data file makes it possible that they could occur well within the body of a file 55 representing a complex document (e.g., separate pages containing 10 Megabyte images).

For the typical case in which the occurrence of special character sequences is relatively rare, substantial processing efficiency (i.e., reduced processing time) could be achieved if their detection were separated from the time-consuming task of contextual evaluation and syntax verification. In such case, the

entire data stream could be monitored during normal processing, but the time-consuming evaluation task could be avoided except for relatively small subsets of the data in the vicinity of the detected special character sequences.

5 An additional problem associated with the searching of character sequences in large data files is the fact that the data is transferred to various stages of processing as relatively small subsets retained in buffers long enough for processing or transfer. Accordingly, each buffer represents a data block which is processed by itself, even though a special character sequence can in fact span such data blocks, with the beginning of the sequence occurring in one data block, and the remainder of the sequence in the next. This fact requires that even with continuous monitoring, only a single data block is seen at a time, and additional state information must be preserved from the search of one data block to the next.

10 It is accordingly a general object of the invention to permit processing of data streams (data files) of arbitrary size, containing any distribution of the desired character sequences, with reduced processing time.

15 It is a specific object of the invention to allow identification of data subsets (data blocks) containing the special multi-byte character sequences through continuous monitoring of normal transfer of data from one point in a spooling / print managing Raster Image Processing system to another.

It is a further specific object of the invention to permit detection of special multi-byte character sequences spanning data blocks, i.e., for which the beginning of a sequence to be detected is in one data block and the remainder of the sequence is in the following data block.

20 It is a still further specific object of the invention that the character monitoring process achieved by the invention adds minimal processing overhead to the routine transfer of data across the data channel to be monitored.

25 It is a feature of this invention to permit use of the monitored data channel by several types of data, with self-identification of the data to be monitored for special character sequences. This feature allows a single data bus in the processing system to be used for several purposes in an interleaved fashion without the additional processing overhead.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

30 The invention makes use of the fact that data transfers from an originating application as described previously take place, as a matter of course, one buffer at a time as the data is processed by network and receiving processing stations. During one of these pre-existing buffer transfers, a logic circuit compares the electrical signals corresponding to the bit pattern of each 8-bit byte transferred to that of the data bytes being searched. If the initial byte of the special byte sequence is found, the logic circuit compares each 35 following character in succession to the corresponding bit pattern required by the special multi-byte sequence. A status register is set during this scanning process indicating detection of one of a given set of special byte sequences. An incomplete special byte sequence detected at the end of the buffer is indicated as well to enable detection of the remainder of the sequence, if present, in the following buffer transfer.

35 The software which is responsible for detection and processing the special multi-byte sequences of interest evaluates the status register at the end of each buffer transfer, and take action according to one of the following conditions:

- 40 (a) No flag has been set, indicating that no special byte sequences have been identified, in which case byte-by-byte scanning of the data may be bypassed completely and the next transfer initiated.
- (b) One or more flags have been set indicating the detection of a complete special byte sequence, in which case the data must be scanned for syntax evaluation and verification that a special byte sequence 45 has indeed been found.
- (c) A flag has been set indicating that the beginning of a sequence has been detected but not its completion. For sequences of n bytes where n is greater than 1, the last n-1 bytes of the data transfer must be retained by the software for use with processing the following block according to cases (a) or (b) above.
- 50 (d) Both cases (b) and (c) have occurred.

Additional state variables can be set and retained from one buffer transfer to another, potentially requiring the partial or complete scanning of subsequent buffers (not containing the special byte sequences) for full verification of syntax, and processing of the content information represented.

55 The digital processing circuitry required to perform the data monitoring according to the method of the invention operates completely in parallel with the actual transfer of data, requiring no additional data bus clock cycles while data is being transferred, and only requires that the flags be reset after power-on or after a match occurs. Accordingly, the time required for detection and evaluation of the special byte sequences is effectively reduced by the ratio of the number of buffers for which no detection occurs to the total

number of buffers transferred for the file. The acceleration of processing speed achieved by this method therefore depends upon the size of the buffers used for the data transfer, and the relative occurrence of the special byte sequences being searched.

5 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The objects and features set forth above and other objects and features of the invention will best be understood from a detailed description of a preferred embodiment thereof, selected for purposes of illustration and shown in the accompanying drawings in which:

10 **FIGURE 1** illustrates a prior art apparatus for detecting and processing special character sequences using a shift register recirculating memory and associated digital logic;

FIGURES 2, 2a, 2b and 2c, respectively, illustrate the digital logic associated with processing of one-, two- and three-character sequences in the system of **FIGURE 1**;

15 **FIGURES 3, 3a and 3b** are block diagrams of an embodiment used in detection and evaluation of document structuring comments by a Raster Image Processor containing a spooler / print manager preprocessor;

FIGURE 4a illustrates the monitoring and decoding of data on the data bus and its subsequent processing;

20 **FIGURE 4b** illustrates the monitoring and comparison of data on the data bus and its subsequent processing;

FIGURE 5 illustrates the logic circuitry used in the preferred embodiment of the invention for character sequence detection and resultant status register values;

FIGURE 6 is a processing logic flowchart for the comment processing software used in the preferred embodiment of the invention; and,

25 **FIGURE 7** is a graph showing the processing speed improvement factor, achieved by the invention, for PostScript document structuring comment searching, as a function of the relative number of blocks containing such comments.

In **FIGURE 1**, a traditional system used for detection and processing of an end of line character sequence in a 1960's era digital typesetting system is shown. A shift register recirculating memory 102 contains a sequence of 6-bit characters in the order to be processed, with a module 104 controlling input 106 of new characters to the sequence as well as the deletion of characters already present in the sequence in the recirculating path. The data circulate continually, at the rate of one character per clock cycle moved past a data readout module 108 and a character code comparator module 110. Within each character time (clock cycle), the character code comparator 110 uses digital logic to compare the current data character code with each of a stored set of codes, and to activate processing logic 112 for any match obtained.

In **FIGURE 2a**, a detail of the character code comparator logic 110 of **FIGURE 1** is shown. A character decoder 202 examines each current character 204, and decodes the electrical signal representing the bits making up the character (6 bits in the example), comparing them with the equivalent signal patterns representing all characters 206 of interest to the system. A match for any of the characters 206 causes the corresponding logic level to be set to "true". For TTL logic, the "true" state is herein taken to be a "high" voltage level. Logic values conforming to these rules are shown symbolically as an uppercase name without a trailing underscore if they are "true" when "high". Those with an uppercase name followed by a trailing underscore are "true" when "low". In the example, a match is shown for the return character (RET) and the corresponding logic level 208 is high ("RET detected").

In **FIGURE 2b**, the logic required for detection of a two-character sequence (return followed by line feed) is shown. The logic level corresponding to RET detected 208 is "saved" in a flip flop register 220. In the following clock cycle 222 the logic level corresponding to LF detected 224 is compared with this "saved" value in an AND gate 226. Both values are logically high (true) only if the return-line feed sequence has occurred, indicating the condition Line End detected 228.

In **FIGURE 2c**, the logic of **FIGURE 2b** is extended to a three-character sequence corresponding to the end of a paragraph: return - line feed - "EM" space. The return detected signal 208 is saved for one clock cycle 222 in flip flop 220 and the next in flip flop 240. The line feed character detected in the following clock cycle 242 is saved in flip flop 244. The EM character detected 246 signal is AND'ed with "RET", delayed by 2 clock cycles and "LF", delayed by 1 clock cycle using AND gate 248. If all three signals are high (true), then the paragraph end detected condition 250 is set.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring to the drawing of **FIGURE 3a**, an originating data source creates a program such as a PostScript program defined previously, describing a document made up of page descriptions and / or images, and possibly containing PostScript comments to be used purely for information purposes and/or to be used to describe the structure of the document. The PostScript program is transferred to a processing system 300, in which the incoming data 310 is first received by an input/output processor 312, passed to a spooler / print manager module 314, and then processed by a Raster Image Processor (RIP) 318 and output as rasterized data 320 to a raster output device 322 such as an imagesetter or film recorder. The spooling function of the spooler / print manager 314 is to allow asynchronous input of data and processing by the RIP 318, by saving the incoming data to a spooling disk 316 for later reading by the RIP 318. The print manager functions are controlled by document structuring comments, as described previously, which are contained within the data stream 310.

In **FIGURE 3b**, a detail of the Spooler / Print manager 314 is shown. The incoming data 310, which can be many tens of megabytes in size, is transferred one buffer at a time to a receiving buffer 342 in the Input / Output processor module. From here it is written to disk 316 for storage until processed by the PostScript interpreter 344. Since the PostScript interpreter 344 processes the program at a different rate from that associated with the spooling disk data transfer, another buffer 348 must be used by the interpreter for later asynchronous processing by the interpreter 344.

The modules making up the embodiment of the invention are located in the data transfer path between the input buffer 342 and the disk writing buffer 346 in such a manner that all data passing along this path can be monitored by a Bit Pattern Decoder 350 which captures the electrical signal corresponding to the sequence of data bits representing each successive ASCII character making up the data stream. This decoder 350 is a logic circuit which provides a unique output for each possible input code value. A pattern decode corresponding to detection of characters making up any of the sequences to be detected causes a 4-bit status register 354 to be set with an appropriate value. The high order bit (bit 4) of this register is always set if the current character being processed is an initial "%" (possibly indicating the beginning of a sequence "%%", "%!" or "%?") and reset otherwise.

At the end of the transfer of each data buffer, the status register 354 contains values to be interpreted as follows:

- (a) A value of 0 indicates that none of the special character sequences or end of buffer condition were detected in the data buffer.
- (b) Values corresponding to setting of bits 1,2 or 3 indicate detection of the complete character sequences "%%", "%!", or "%?" respectively.
- (c) Values with bit 4 set indicate that the last character of the buffer is a "%" character, possibly signalling the beginning of a two character sequence to be completed in the next buffer.
- (d) All combinations of bit values are possible, indicating 16 independently possible conditions (e.g., a register value of 13 indicates that "%%" and "%?" have been detected in the buffer, and that the last character of the buffer is "%").

After completion of a data transfer to the temporary buffer 346, the comment processor 356 uses the value in the status register 354 to determine whether a character-by-character scan of the data in the buffer 346 is required to detect and evaluate document structuring comments. If the status register 354 contains values corresponding to bits 1, 2, or 3 set, indicating the detection of the "%%", "%!", or "%?" sequences respectively, the comment processor 356 sets a software switch which causes it to scan the data now present in the temporary buffer 346 character-by-character, to extract the comment information from that buffer before the data stream is written to disk 316 by means of data write buffer 347 for input to the PostScript Interpreter 344 through read buffer 348. If bits 1, 2 and 3 of status register 354 are 0, no comment has been detected in this last data transfer, and the data in the disk buffer 346 is written to disk 316 with no further processing before input to the PostScript Interpreter 344; thereby saving the processing time required to scan character by character.

If bit 4 of the status register 354 is set at the end of the transfer, the last character of the buffer was found to be "%", and the detection of a document structuring comment in the next buffer depends upon the first character of that buffer.

Before beginning the next data transfer, the comment processor 356 resets bits 1, 2, and 3 of the status register 354 for the next buffer to 0. Bit 4 is retained as a beginning of sequence indicator as if processing the previous buffer.

FIGURE 4a shows a more detailed view of the Bit Pattern Decoder 350 of **FIGURE 3** in schematic form. The central data path 360 employed within the RIP data system contains 9 lines, of which 8 are used as

data lines 362, and the ninth as a control line 364. In the simplified view of Figure 4, the control line 364 represents the appropriate decode of address and control signals. It should be understood that the term "data path" as used herein refers to data, control and address lines. The control line 364 is low (logical 0) during transfers on the bus for which no monitoring, is to take place, and high (logical 1) when monitoring is to take place. The signal decoder 366 is constantly reading all nine lines, but takes no action unless the control line 364 is high. Decoder 366 decodes an indication of "%", "!", or "?" that is processed by a status logic circuit 370 to set one or more of the 4 bits of the status register 354 as follows:

- (a) If a character "%" is detected and bit 4 of the status register 354 is 1, then the character of the previous clock cycle was a "%" character, and the current character is the final character of a "%%" sequence. Bit 4 of the status register 354 remains set to 1 and bit 1 is set.
- (b) If a character "%" is detected and bit 4 of the status register 354 is 0, then the character of the previous clock cycle was not a "%" character and the current character could be the initial character of a two character sequence. Bit 4 of the status register 354 is set to 1 reflecting this condition.
- (c) If the characters "!" or "?" are detected and bit 4 of the status register 354 is 1, then the previous character was a "%" character, and the current character is the final character of a "%!" or "%?" sequence. Bit 4 of status register 354 is reset to 0 and bit 2 or 3 set to 1 accordingly.
- (d) If the characters "!" or "?" are detected and bit 4 of the status register 354 is 0, then no sequence is in process and they are ignored. The status register 354 remains unchanged.

It will be appreciated that another embodiment shown in FIGURE 4b can utilize a comparator 367 instead of a decoder. In each instance, the data stream is evaluated for the presence of the multi-byte sequence. The comparator 367 compares the signals on data lines 362 with reference signal patterns 352. However, no action is taken unless control line 364 is high.

FIGURE 5 shows a detail of the digital logic circuitry 350 which implements the Signal Decoder 366, the Status Logic Circuit 370, and the status register 354 of FIGURE 4. In this example, the combined system bus 510 is made up of the 8-line data bus 362, an address bus 512 and a control bus 514 controlling many functions, including those related to the invention.

The high-order address bit (of the 24-bit address word) is used as the control line 364 of FIGURE 4, effectively creating a pseudo "address-space" for data which is to be monitored by the invention mirroring that of data which is to be transferred without monitoring. The comment control module 520 uses the control and address bus lines to generate the signals COMPAR_ 522, RDFLG_ 524 and CLRFLG_ 526 to be used as described below.

The eight-bit data bus 362 is sampled continuously by eight lines 368 input to the decoder module 366, which compares the incoming bit patterns with those stored for the special characters of interest 352, consisting of "%", "!", "?" in addition to other ASCII text characters 530. A new character appears at the decoder in every character clock cycle time as synchronized by the SYSCLK signal 540. The current character corresponds to the latest cycle. The COMPAR_ signal 522 is used to control the individual element functions by enabling or disabling flip flops, and as a required value in AND operations.

If the previous character was "%", it appears at the output of flip flop 532, and is AND'ed with the current character outputs for "%", "!" and "?" in gates 550, 560 and 570 respectively. These gates detect the corresponding sequences "%%", "%!" and "%?" provided that the COMPAR_ signal 522 is low (true). The outputs of gates 550, 560 and 570 are stored in the flip flops 552, 562 and 572 respectively. These three flip flops comprise bits 1, 2 and 3 of the output status register 354 and may be read at any subsequent time under control of the RDFLAG_ signal 524. The "%%" sequence causes the Bit 1 output 554 to be set, the "%!" sequence causes the Bit 2 output 564 to be set, and the "%?" sequence causes the Bit 3 output 574 to be set.

In any clock cycle, the signal PREVIOUS% 536 appearing at the readout buffer 580 is true if the previous character was "%" and false otherwise. Therefore, if the RDFLAG_ signal 524 is given at the end of the last character transferred, Bit 4 will be found to be set only if the last character was a "%" character. The other bits, controlled by flip flops 552, 562 and 572 retain their output signals during the entire transfer process, ensuring that each bit is set independently and retained if at least one occurrence of the corresponding sequence has been detected.

The flip flops 552, 562 and 572 are reset by the CLRFLG_ signal 526, which is issued by the control logic 520 at the beginning of the next transfer. The flip flop 532 representing Bit 4 is not reset by CLRFLG_ signal 526, however, thus allowing the search to continue in the next block transfer.

In FIGURE 6, a data processing flowchart is shown for the comment processor 356 of FIGURE 3b. The processor operates in a continuous loop after starting a transfer until done (all data has been transferred). During each buffer transfer (box 610) the processor must wait until the transfer is complete or process another task asynchronously. The completion of the transfer is signalled by the mechanism performing the

transfer, independently of the invention.

After completion of the transfer, the processor must first examine the status register 354 (box 620), and check to see if any of the bits 1, 2, or 3 are set corresponding to the conditions previously described (test 624). If any are set, then at least one of the indicated sequences has been detected (box 630), and the entire buffer must be scanned, character by character, to determine the context within which the sequence(s) have been detected (box 640). As a result of this scan, the sequences may indicate valid document structuring comments, coincidental occurrences in another context, or syntax errors. If valid, the operations indicated by the comments are carried out (box 650). After this processing, the temporary buffer 346 is transferred to the disk write buffer 347, and setup for the next transfer accomplished (box 660).

If none of the bits 1, 2, or 3 are set (test 624), the data can be written to disk (box 660) without further processing by the comment processor. At this point, if this is not the last buffer in the total data transfer (test 670), the process repeats again (box 610 and following), otherwise, exit is taken from the loop and the processing is done.

The processing software is not required to examine bit 4 of status register 354, since the condition flagged by that bit, a "%" as the last character of the buffer, is only significant in the processing of the following buffer. In the event that the first character of the following buffer is a "%", "?" or "!", bits 1,2 or 3 will be set when the loop operates on that buffer. This is true for the PostScript example described above in connection with the preferred embodiment. In other cases, the validity of a byte sequence to be detected may depend upon its context within the data preceding the sequence as well as following it. In the case of PostScript comments, only the trailing context need be examined, provided that any state-dependent information required to determine validity may be maintained independently or derived from information in the buffer in which the sequence is detected and scanned character-by-character. A consequence of this requirement is that the buffer size must be 65,536 Bytes or larger, to enable verification of the fact that the two-character sequences detected by the method are not coincidental occurrences within a valid PostScript character string (whose length is limited to 65,536 characters).

In FIGURE 7, the improvement factor I for the preferred embodiment is shown as a function of the relative number of blocks (data segments transferred at once) containing at least one structured comment sequence. The factor I is obtained according to the following equation:

30

$$I = \frac{(t_2 N_T + t_s N_T)}{(t_1 N_T + t_s N_B)} \quad [1]$$

35

where: t_1 and t_2 are the transfer times per data block with and without using the method of the invention respectively, t_s is the time required for a character-by-character scan of a block of data for comments (in software), N_B is the number of blocks for which a comment or coincidental occurrence is detected according to the method, and N_T is the total number of blocks transferred. As a result of the parallel processing nature of the invention, the times t_1 and t_2 are essentially equal. In the preferred embodiment, the size of the data blocks transferred are in excess of 65,536 Bytes as indicated previously, to ensure that "non-comment" character sequences are not hidden in PostScript strings which are contained in or span data blocks. Accordingly, it can be assumed that t_s is much greater than t_1 or t_2 , with the result that equation [1] reduces to:

45

$$I = \frac{N_T}{N_B} \quad [2]$$

50

The form shown in FIGURE 7 corresponds to the inverse relationship of equation [2].

Having described in detail a preferred embodiment of our invention, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that numerous modifications can be made therein without departing from the scope of the invention as defined in the following claims.

Claims

1. An apparatus for detecting at least one set of multi-byte sequences in a data stream, with each set of multi-byte sequences having predetermined sequences of n-bit bytes, said data stream transferring data from one location to another location over a data path having n data lines with one data line for each bit in an n-bit data byte, said apparatus comprising:
 - (a) means for monitoring and continuously evaluating the signal pattern on the n data lines existing at each data byte transfer cycle time for the bit sequences for each n-bit byte of said predetermined sequences of n-bit bytes in each set of multi-byte sequences, said monitoring and evaluating means operating without affecting the transfer of data on said data path; and,
 - (b) utilization means responsive to the result of at least two evaluations performed by said monitoring and evaluating means at successive data byte transfer cycle times.
2. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said monitoring and evaluating means includes a comparator.
3. The apparatus of claim 2 wherein said comparator compares the signal pattern on the n data lines existing at each data byte transfer cycle time with previously stored reference signals corresponding to the bit sequences for each n-bit byte of said predetermined sequences of n-bit bytes in each set of multi-byte sequences and wherein said comparator performs at least two comparisons at successive data byte transfer cycle times and wherein said utilization means is responsive to the result of at least two said comparisons.
4. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said evaluating means includes a decoder.
5. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said data path has n+1 lines with n lines used for the transfer of data and the additional line comprising a control signal line, said apparatus further comprising means for selectively enabling and disabling said monitoring and evaluating means in response to a control signal on said control signal line.
6. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said data stream transfers data in blocks of data with each block having sequential segments of data bytes transferred one after the other, said utilization means including means for generating a status flag that is reset at the beginning of each block transfer with the status of the flag representing the evaluation of the presence or absence of any of said predetermined sequences of n-bit bytes in each set of multi-byte sequences in the block.
7. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said data stream transfers data in blocks of data with each block having sequential segments of data bytes transferred one after the other, said utilization means including means for detecting the presence of a beginning portion of said predetermined sequences of n-bit bytes in a set of multi-byte sequences occurring at the end of one data block and the presence of the remaining portion of the predetermined sequences of n-bit bytes in the set of multi-byte sequences occurring at the beginning of the next successive data block.
8. The apparatus of claim 1 wherein said data comprises text and wherein said monitoring and evaluating means evaluates the data stream of text for the presence of predetermined sequences of n-bit bytes representing characters of text.
9. The apparatus of claim 8 wherein said monitoring and evaluating means evaluates the data stream of text for text sequences of two characters in length.
10. The apparatus of claim 9 wherein said monitoring and evaluating means evaluates the data stream of text for the two character text sequences of "%%", "%!", or "%?".
11. A method for detecting at least one set of multi-byte sequences in a data stream, with each set of multi-byte sequences having predetermined sequences of n-bit bytes, said data stream transferring data from one location to another location over a data path having n data lines with one data line for each bit in an n-bit data byte, said method comprising the steps of:
 - (1) monitoring and continuously evaluating the signal pattern on the n data lines existing at each data byte transfer cycle time for the bit sequences for each n-bit byte of said predetermined sequences

of n-bit bytes in each set of multi-byte sequences, said monitoring and evaluating being performed without affecting the transfer of data on said data path; and,

(2) utilizing the result of at least two evaluations performed by said monitoring and evaluating means at successive data byte transfer cycle times.

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12. The method of claim 11 wherein said evaluation includes comparing the signal pattern on the n data lines existing at each data byte transfer cycle time with previously stored reference signals corresponding to the bit sequences for each n-bit byte of said predetermined sequences of n-bit bytes in each set of multi-byte sequences, said comparison being performed at least two successive data byte transfer 10 cycle times and wherein the result of at least two of said comparisons is utilized.

10

13. The method of claim 11 further comprising the step of selectively performing the step of monitoring and evaluating the signal pattern in response to a control signal.

15

14. The method of claim 11 wherein said data stream transfers data in blocks of data with each block having sequential segments of data bytes transferred one after the other and further comprising the step of generating a status flag that is reset at the beginning of each block transfer with the status of the flag representing the evaluation of the presence or absence of any of said predetermined sequences of n-bit bytes in each set of multi-byte sequences in the block.

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15. The method of claim 11 wherein said data stream transfers data in blocks of data with each block having sequential segments of data bytes transferred one after the other and further comprising the steps of detecting the presence of a beginning portion of said predetermined sequences of n-bit bytes in a set of multi-byte sequences occurring at the end of one data block and detecting the presence of 25 the remaining portion of the predetermined sequences of n-bit bytes in the set of multi-byte sequences occurring at the beginning of the next successive data block.

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16. The method of claim 11 wherein said data comprises text and further comprising the step of evaluating the data stream of text for the presence of predetermined sequences of n-bit bytes representing 30 characters of text.

17. The method of claim 16 further comprising the step of evaluating the data stream of text for text sequences of two characters in length.

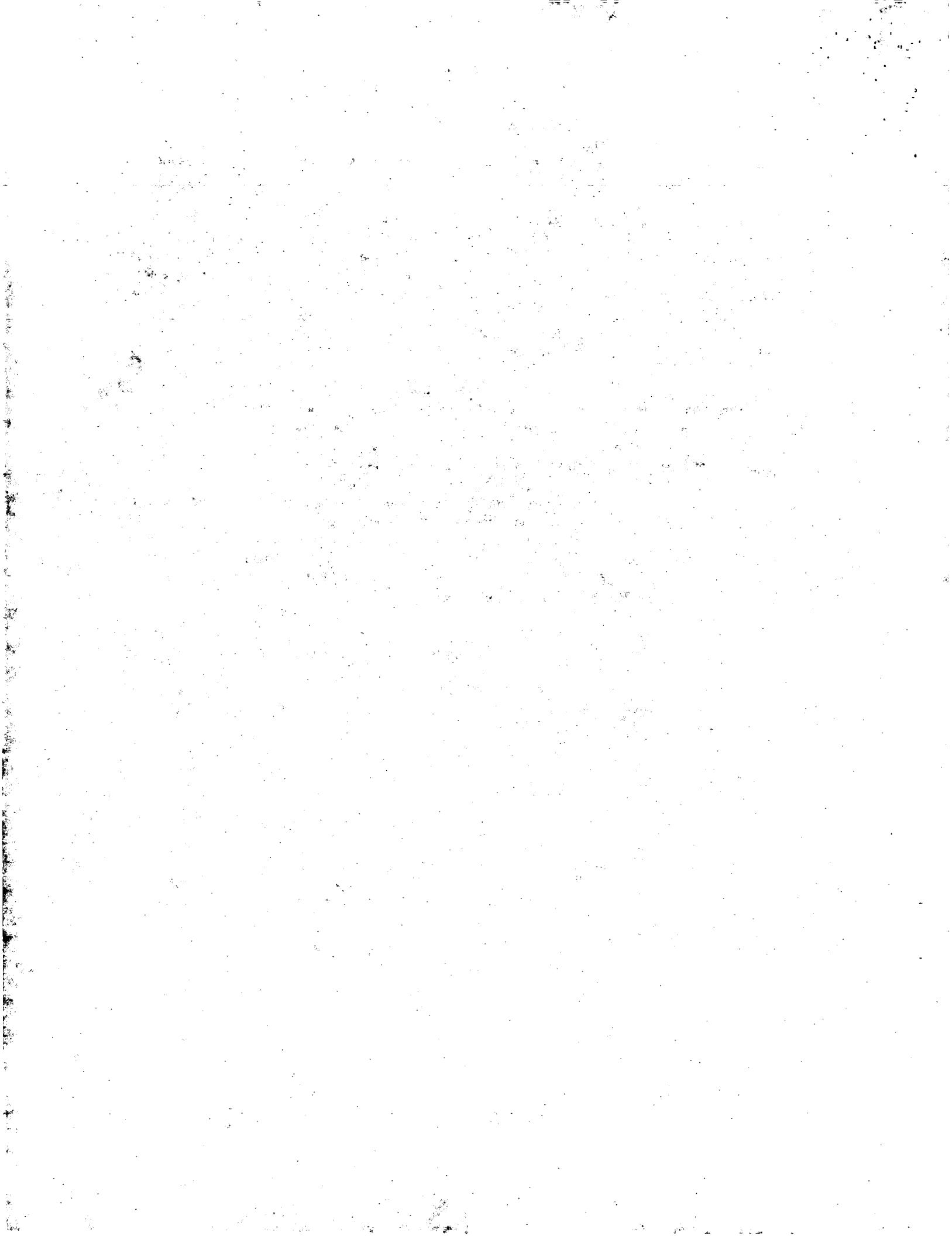
35 18. The apparatus of claim 17 further comprising the step of evaluating the data stream of text for the two character text sequences of "%%", "%!", or "%?".

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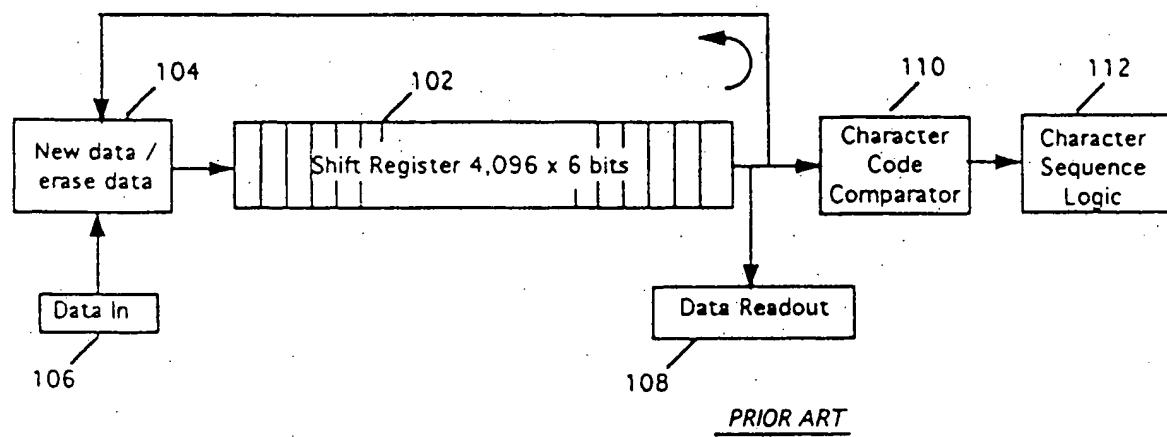


FIGURE 1

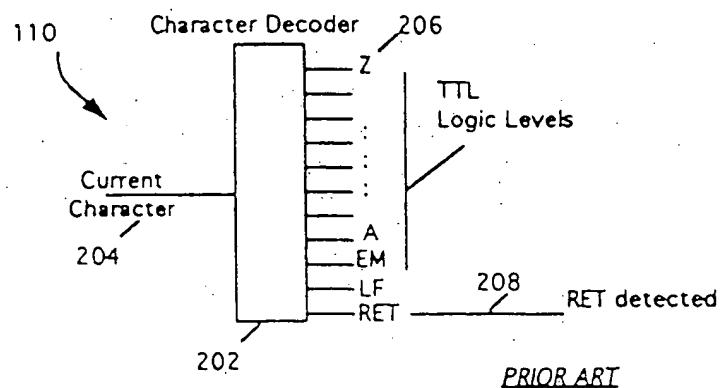


FIGURE 2a

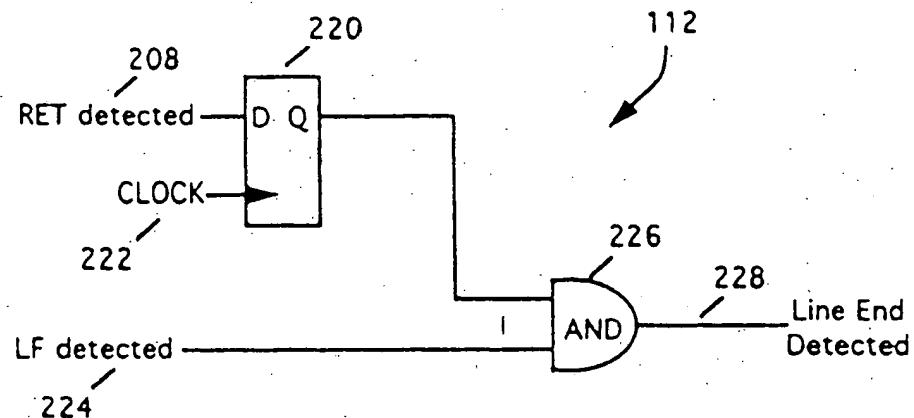
PRIOR ART

FIGURE 2b

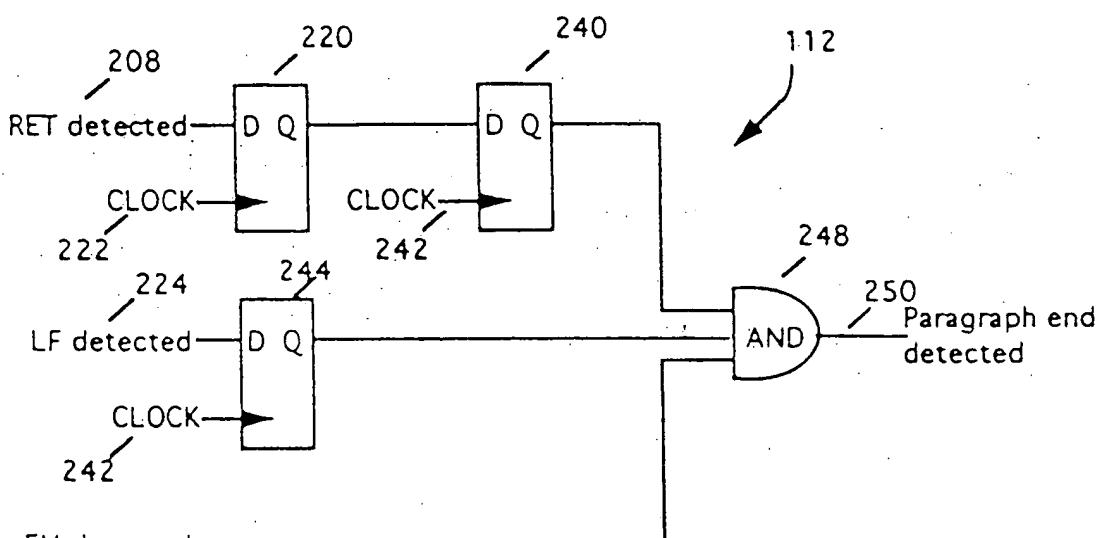
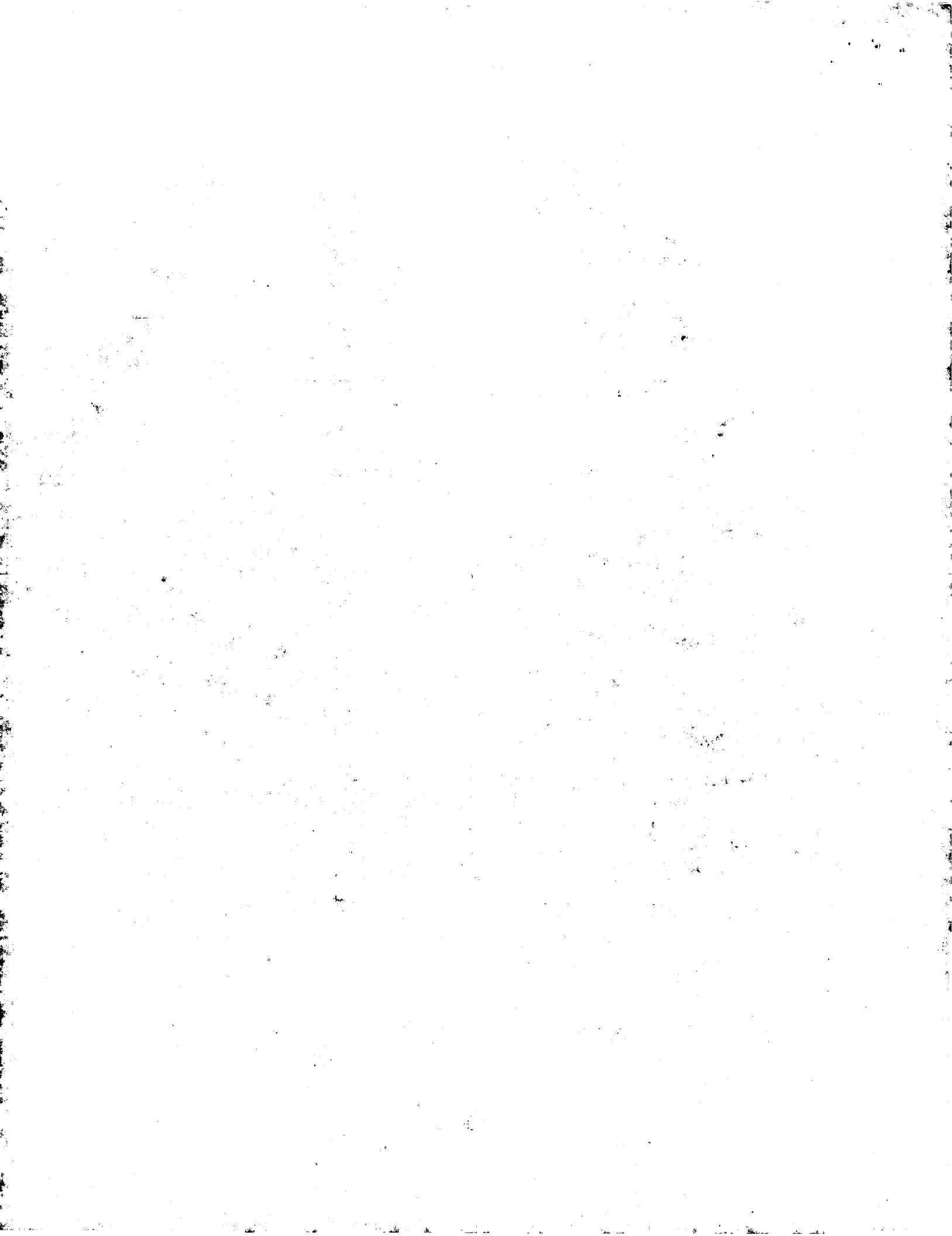
PRIOR ART

FIGURE 2c



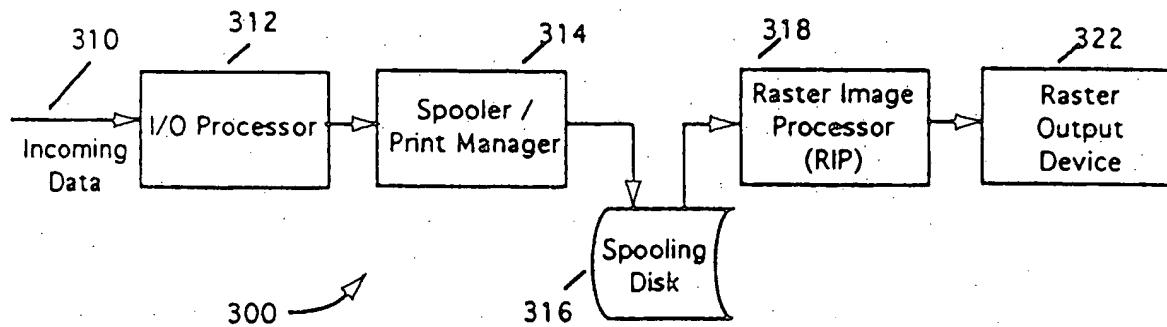


FIGURE 3A

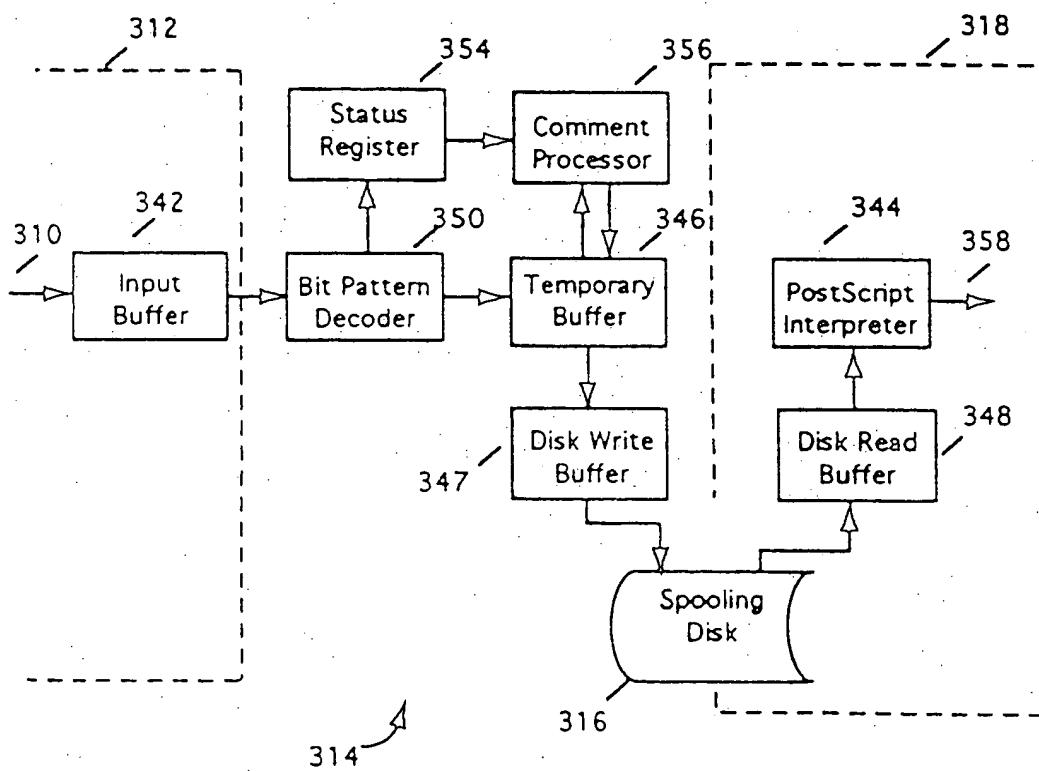


FIGURE 3B

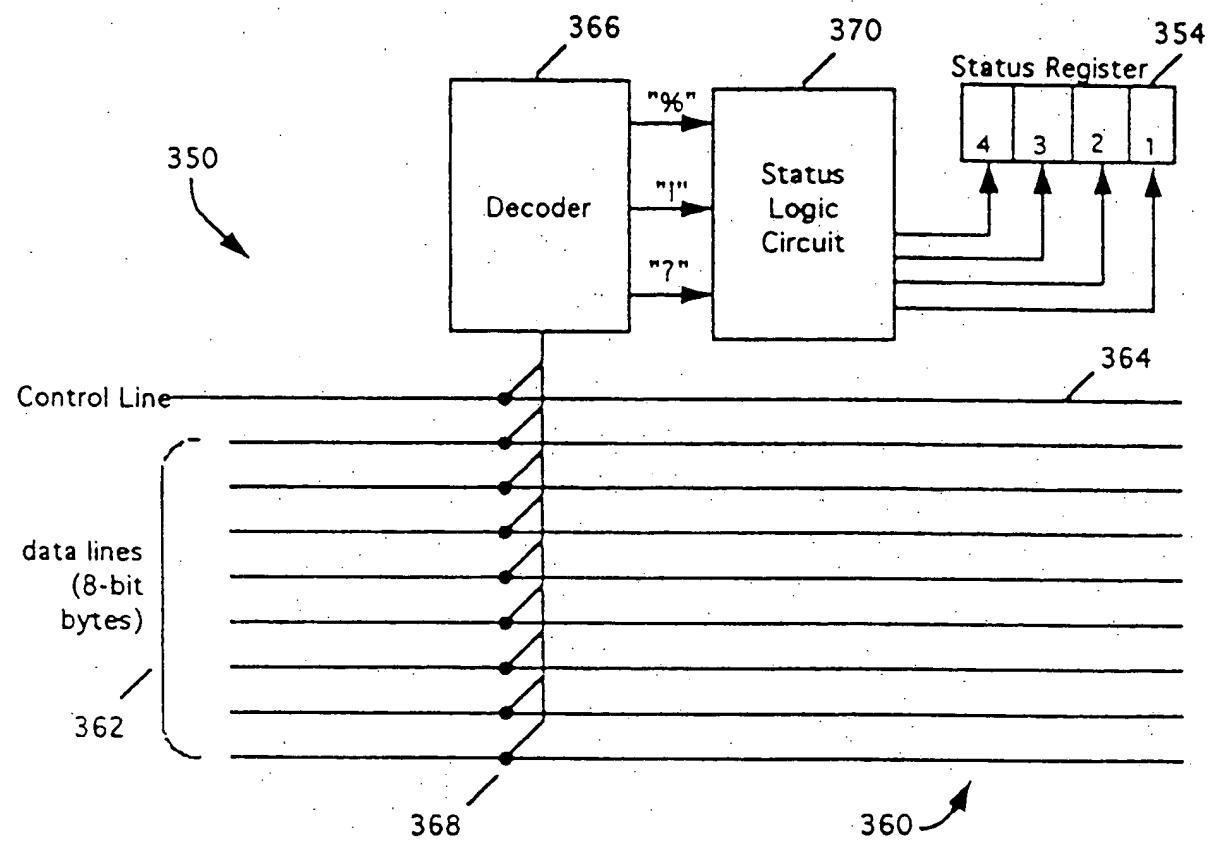


FIGURE 4A

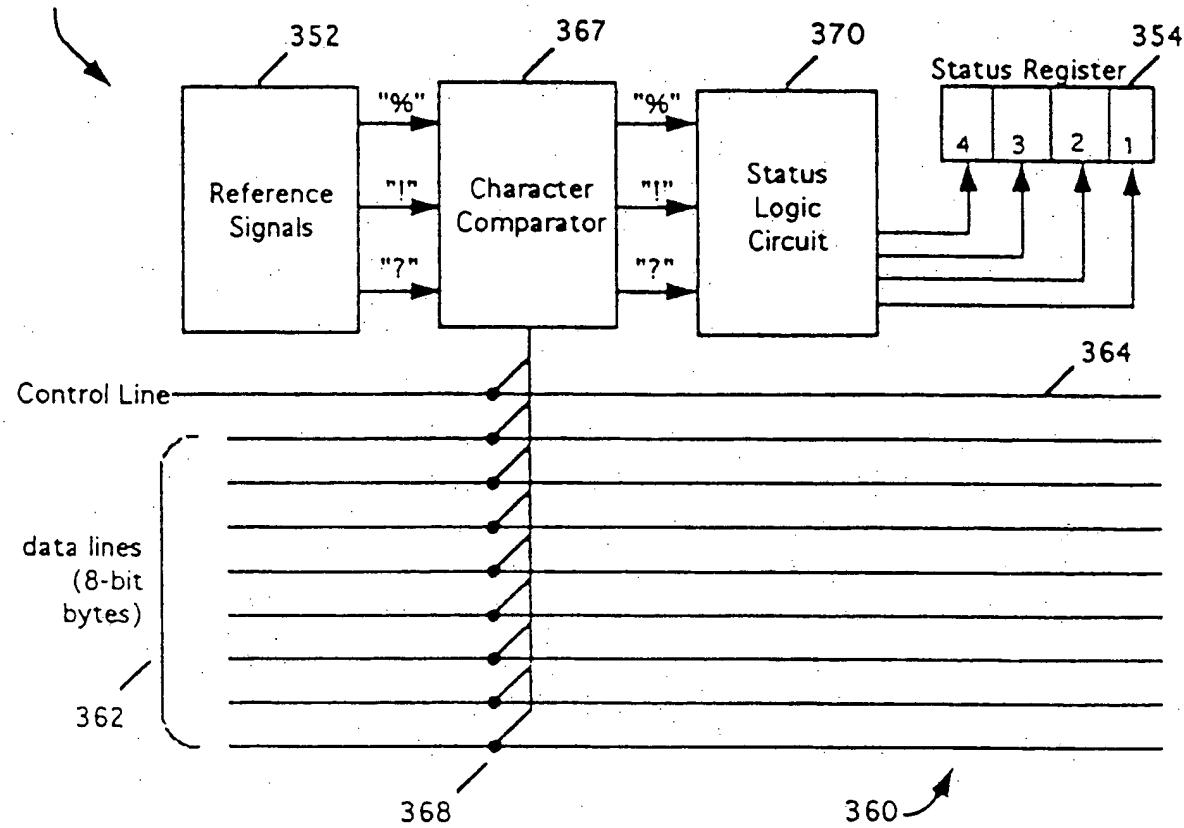


FIGURE 4B

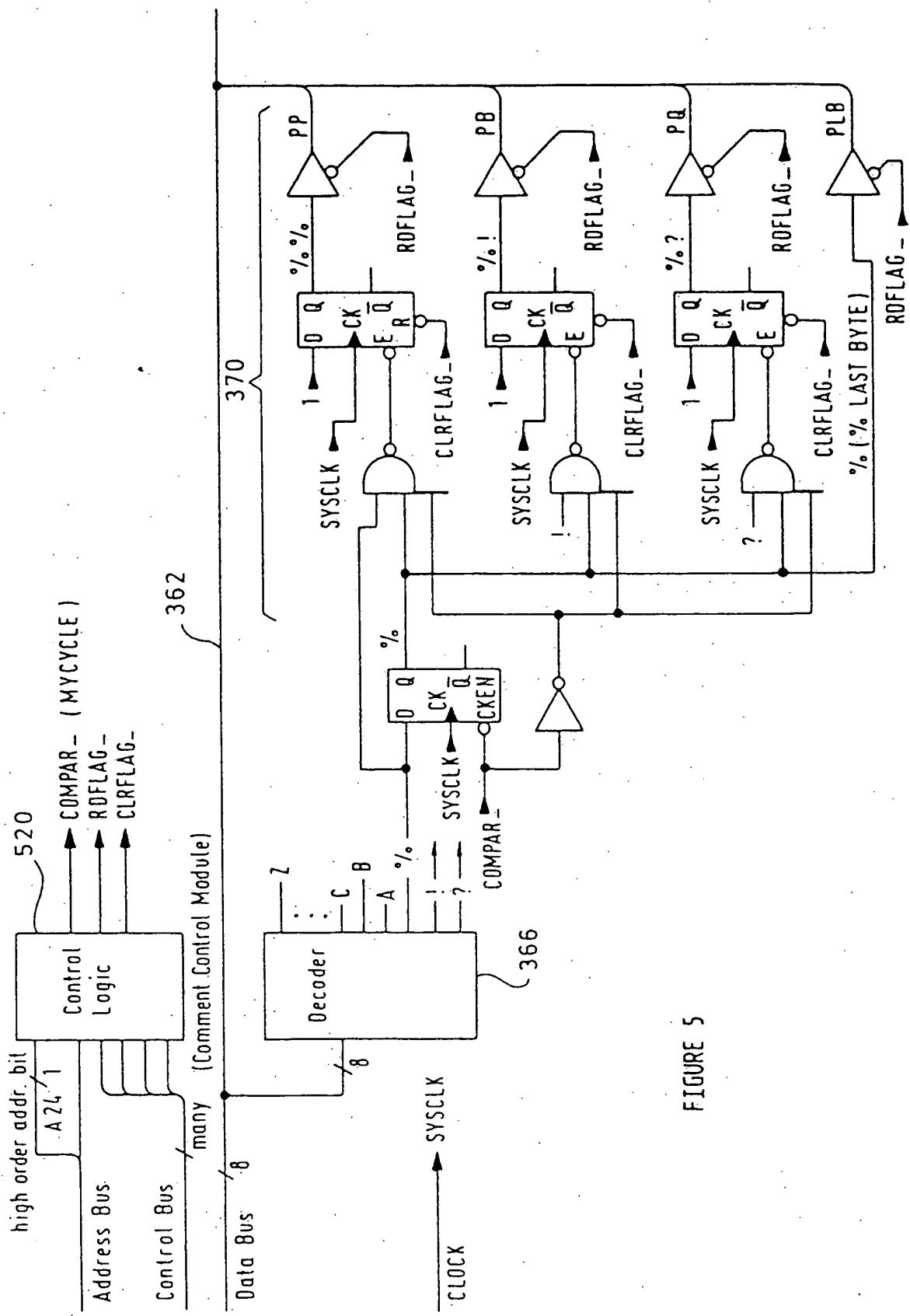
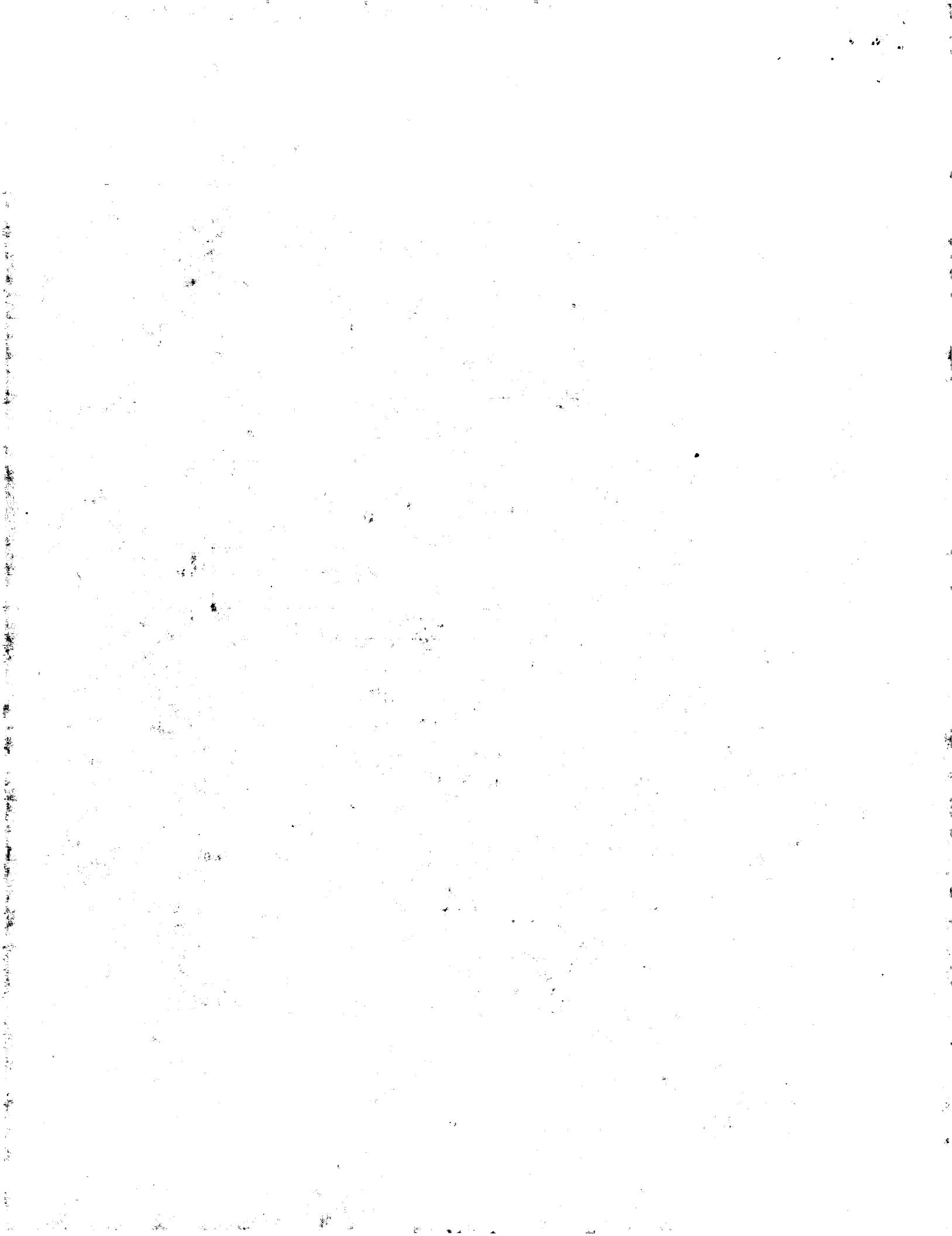


FIGURE 5



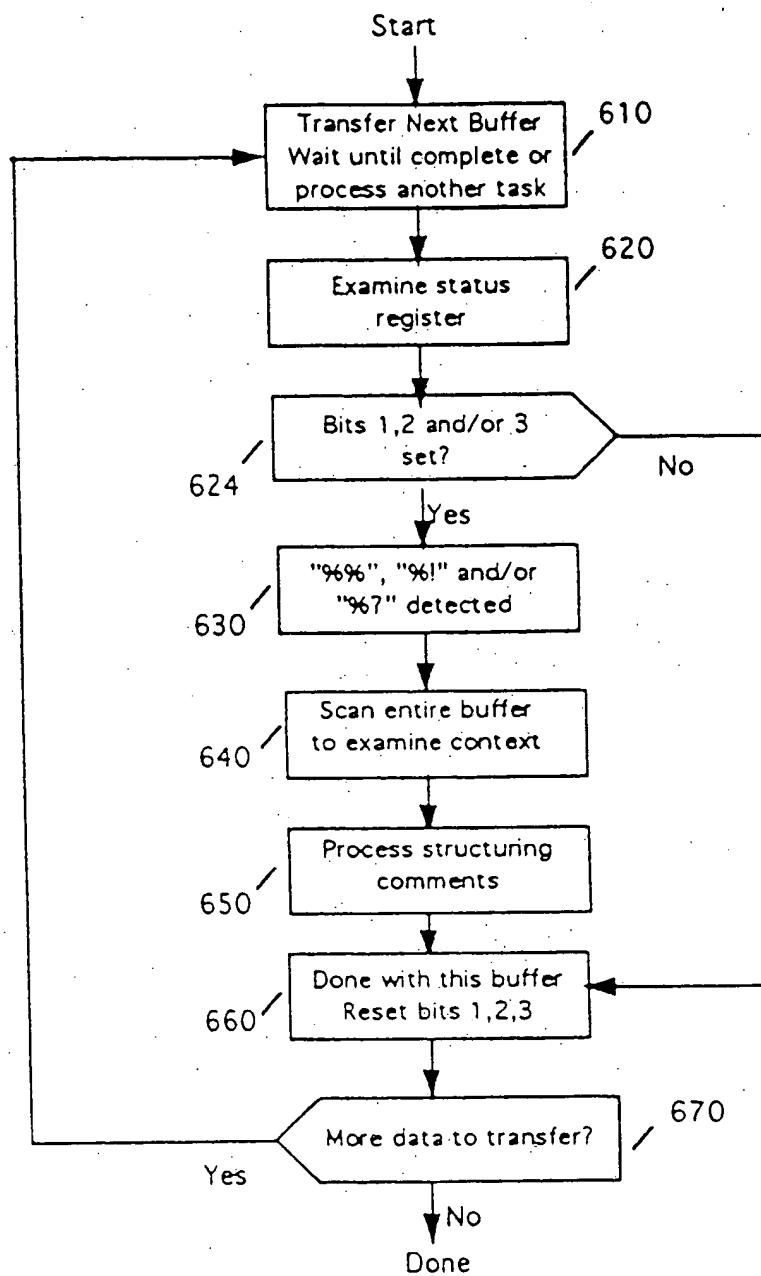
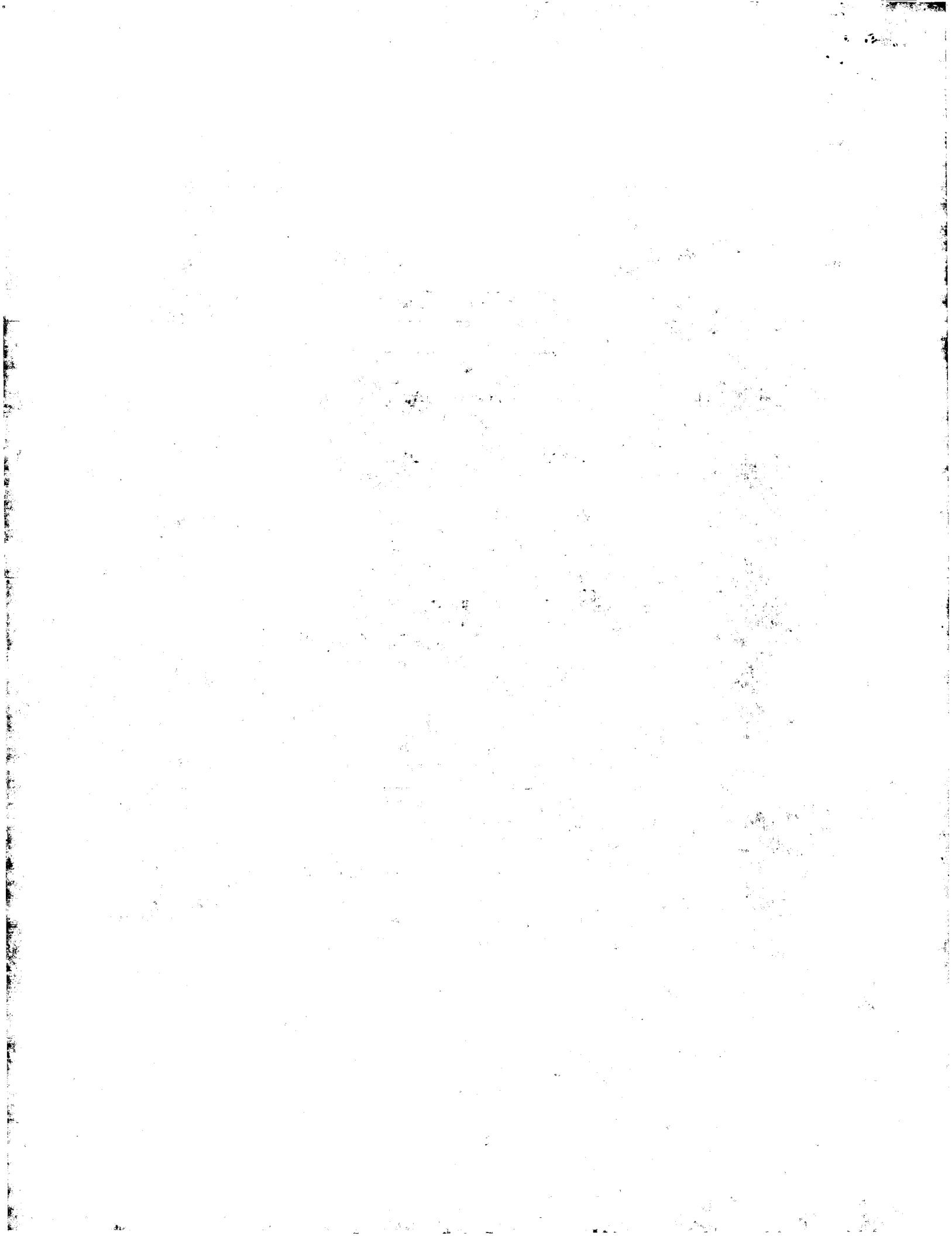


FIGURE 6



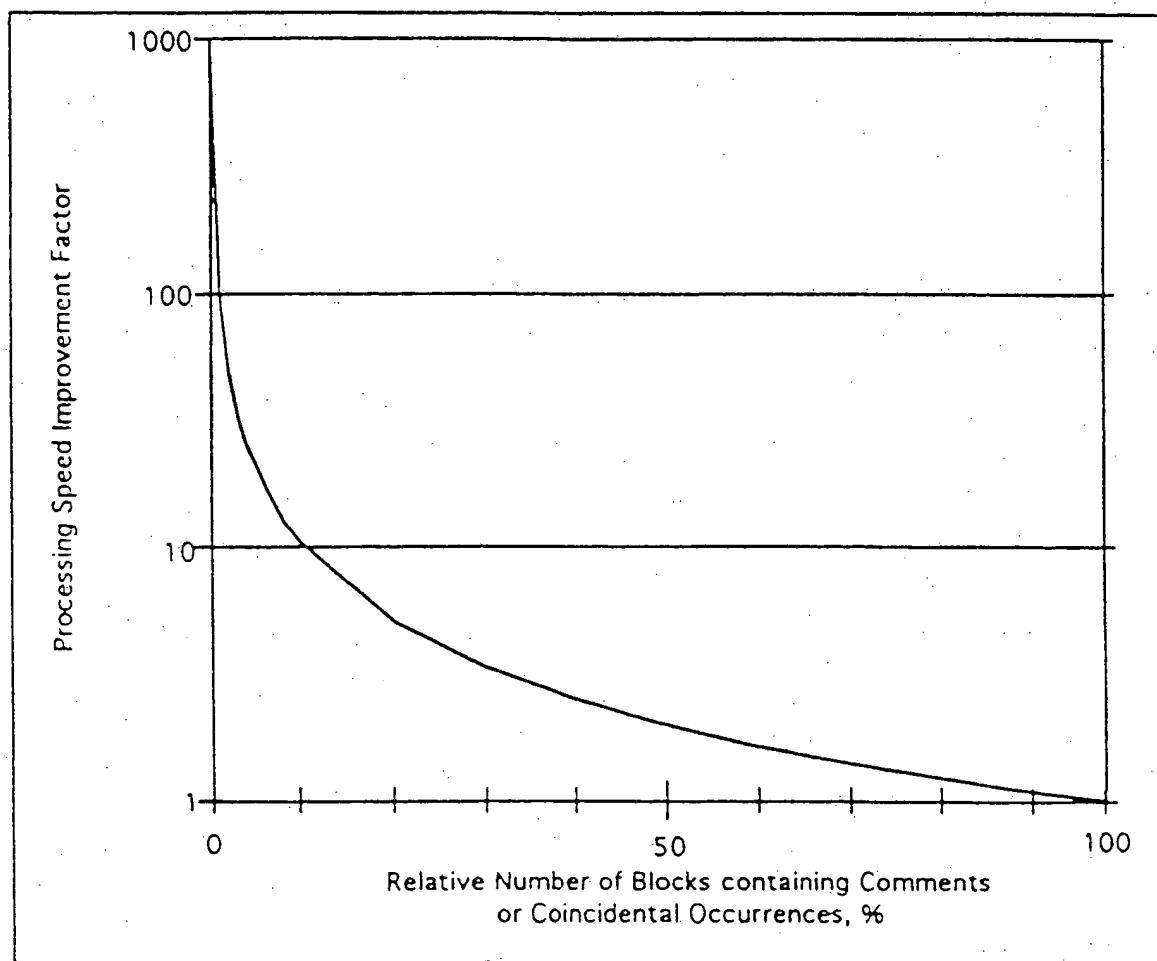


FIGURE 7

